DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 972 HE 023 129

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TITLE An Argyrian Perspective on Behavior in Instructional Consultation in Postsecondary Education.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Consultants; *Consultation Programs; *Cooperation; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Interpersonal Communication; Teacher Effectiveness; Theories
IDENTIFIERS *Argyrian Theory

ABSTRACT

The study examined instructional consultation in terms of Argyrian theory by carrying out three specific tasks: (1) operationalizing the key Argyrian concepts of collaboration and bilateral control; (2) classifying and coding consultation behaviors on videotapes; and (3) drawing implications from the data for researchers and practitioners. The study attempted to answer the following questions: (1) to what extent do instructional consultants use collaborative practice by establishing bilateral control of consultations? (2) to what extent do collaborative acts (checking, specificity, and rationale) affect the responses of clients? (3) what other variables are related to degree of collaboration found in instructional consultation? and (4) what patterns or episodes of behavior are particularly collaborative or highly controlling? Evaluation of Interactions of ten pairs of subjects (each pair consisting of an instructional consultant and a university faculty member) found that true collaborative consultation was rare; that consultant behavior was usually controlling, non-confrontable, and non-explicit; that when consultants used collaborative techniques, client responses were active, suggesting ownership; that instrumentation affected degree of collaboration with observation or paper and pencil instruments usually producing more collaboration than video; and that typical episodes could be identified as either agenda setting, questioning, or lack of questioning. Implications for practice and future research are suggested. Three references. (DB)

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AN ARGYRIAN PERSPECTIVE ON BEHAVIOR IN INSTRUCTIONAL CONSULTATION IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

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Prepared for the American Educational Research Association

San Francisco, March 1989.

HE 023 129

Argyrian Perspective on Instructional Consultation in Postsecondary Education

CHART I - DESIGN OF THE INQUIRY

The major purpose of this inquiry was to examine instructional consultation in terms of Argyrian Theory.

The three specific tasks for this inquiry were:

- To operationalize key concepts from Argyrian theory, namely, collaboration and bilateral control.
- To develop a coding scheme for classifying these behaviors and to use these codes with video taped data.
- To draw implications from the data for both researchers and practitioners.

This investigation was designed to provide answers for the following research questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent do instructional consultants use collaborative practice by establishing bi-lateral control of consultations?

Research Question 2: To what extent do collaborative acts (checking, specificity, and rationale) affect the responses of clients.

Research Question 3: What other variables are related to the degree of collaboration found in an instructional consultation.

Research Question 4: What patterns or episodes of behavior are particularly collaborative or highly controlling.

CHART II - MOTIVATION FOR CONDUCTING THIS STUDY

Why was this study conducted?

To compliment the work of Kate Brinko (1988) on instructional consultation by examining the consultation setting from an Argyrian perspective.

To seek empirical support for the compelling theoretical contribution of Argyris and others interested in reflective practice.

To investigate the behavioral episode as a meaningful unit for research or teaching improvement.

CHART III - PRIOR RESEARCH AND PERSONAL BELIEFS

What did we expect to find in this study?

Research on Instructional Consultation: Brinko's work with video taped consultation found that two models of consultation were most frequently practiced by consultants. She termed these the prescriptive and the collaborative.

Research on Human Behavior: Argyris (1985) and others, using an Action Theory model of consultation, have found that even trained practitioners often behave in non-collaborative ways and are unable to establish bi-lateral control in their meetings.

-trained individuals who espouse collaborative goals nevertheless produce non-collaborative interventions.

-non-collaborative behaviors create defensive dynamics resulting in less personal involvement for both actors.

-a consultant who makes reasoning explicit invites confrontation and, in a collaborative setting, produces greater personal involvement.

CHART IV - THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Who participated in this study?

Ten Pairs of subjects from mostly midwestern research universities. Each pair consists of...

An instructional consultant who is part of a university faculty development staff. Consultants included both males and females, represented a range of consulting experience and used a variety of consulting instruments.

A faculty member from that university. Faculty included both males and females, tenured and non-tenured, volunteer and non-volunteer and represented a wide range of experience.

Some pairs are meeting for the first time whole others have consulted prior to this meeting.

The **goal** of each consultation was the presentation of feedback from the consultant to the teacher for the purpose of **improving teaching.** These are **not tenure or promotion reviews.**

The length of these meetings ranged from approximately **30 to 50 minutes.**

CHART V - RESEARCH DESIGN

How can collaboration and bi-lateral control be identified/measured using video taped data?

The behaviors underlined below were identified and coded from the videotapes.

-Questioning (see Appendix 1) and **steering** (see Appendix 2) were chosen because, according to Argyris, they play a critical role in establishing control in a session.

-For **questioning**, **specificity** and **rationale** were chosen as sub-categories. A specific question with rationale tends to increase disconfirmability which is a necessary part of collaborative practice.

-For **steering**, **checking** and **rationale** were chosen as sub-categories. An act of steering that includes checking and rationale tends to establish bi-lateral control which is a necessary part of collaborative practice.

In accordance with Argyrian theory, hypotheses about client responses to the consultant's questioning and steering were develped. Client responses were coded "As Hypothesized" when:

a. Clients responded with active ownership and involvement after consultant specificity, checking or rationale.
b. Clients responded with passive, lack of ownership after consultants failed to provide specificity, checking or rationale.

The coding scheme represented below was used on the ten video taped consultations.

	Questioning		Steering		Active	
Time	Rationale	Specific	Rationale	Check	Response	As Hypoth.
00:04	NO	NO			NO	Yes
00:51			YES	YES	YES	YES

The two sample codes above read as follows:

At time :04, the consultant questioned the client with NO rationale and NO specificity. The clients response was NOT active which is **As Hypothesized**.

At time :51, the consultant steered the meeting WITH rationale and WITH checking. The client's response was active (YES) which is **As Hypothesized**.

CHART VI - FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

To what extent are instructional consultants utilizing collaborative practice in consultations?

	COLLABORRATIVE ACTS		
	Both	One	Neither
QUESTIONS (n=157)	40 (25%)	78 (50%)	39 (25%)
STEERING (n= 86)	4 (4%)	16 (19%)	66 (77%)

For questioning, the subcategories are rationale and specificity.
For steering, the subcategories are rationale and checking.

TRENDS

-Supporting previous research, these results suggests that collaborative consultation is rare. Consultant behavior tends to be controlling, non-confrontable, and non-explicit.

-Regarding questions, the display shows that consultants use **both** subcategories of collaborative acts in **25%** of the questions and use **neither** subcategory in **25%** of their quesitions. This provides some evidence of collaborative questioning.

-Regarding steering, consultants use both subcategories of collaborative acts in only **4%** of their acts of steering and use neither subcategory in **77%**. This is highly non-collaborative and is consistant with other research on consultant behavior.

CHART VII - FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

To what extent do collaborative acts (checking, specificity, and rationale) affect the responses of clients?

	CLIENT RESPONSES	
	As Hypothesized	Not As Hypothesized
QUESTIONS (n=157)	73%	27%
STEERING (n= 86)	86%	14%

TRENDS

-Argyrian theory suggests that consultant behavior will have a predictable effect on client response. That response is a function of the information supplied to the client and of the flow of control from consultant to client.

-The display shows that predictions about client responses based on Argyrian theory are correct for 73% of questions asked. Predictions about client responses are correct for 86% of acts of steering.

These results support the following generalizations regarding consultant-client dynamics:

-When consultants provide specific information and the logical rationale for their questions, clients' responses are likely to be active and suggest ownership.

-When consultants ask questions which are vague and lack rationale, consultants responses are likely to be passive and lack ownership.

-When consultants steer the meeting using checking and rationale, clients are likely to become actively involved in the steering process.

-When consultants steer the meeting without using checking and rationale, clients are likely to remain passive.

CHART VIII - FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

Does **instrumentation** have an impact on the degree of collaboration found in an instructional consultation?

QUESTIONING: RATIONALE AND SPECIFICITY

Instrument	BOTH	ONE	NEITHER
VIDEO (n=67)	10%	56%	34%
OBSERVATION (n=41)	24%	61%	15%
PAPER/PENCIL(n=49)	47%	33%	20%

STEERING: RATIONALE AND CHECKING

Instrument	BOTH	ONE	NEITHER
VIDEO (n=14)	21%	22%	57%
OBSERVATION (n=27)	3%	22%	75%
PAPER/PENCIL(n=45)	0%	4%	96%

TRENDS

-Use of instruments by consultants appears to be related to collaboration. Questioning seems to be slightly more collaborative when observation or paper and pencil instruments are used than when video is used. Regarding steering, the reverse seems to be true in that a greater degree of collaboration occurs with video.

CHART IX - FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION FOUR

What episodes of behavior are particularly collaborative or highly controlling?

In the course of reviewing the ten video tapes certain typical episodes were particularly sriking. An episode is a unit of interaction functioning as part of a relationship or larger discourse. It is characterized by a fairly distinct beginning and ending and a single overt purpose. Illustrative episodes are included in the appendix.

AGENDA SETTING EPISODES were the most interesting of the episodes. Agenda setting was accomplished in three ways:

> THE DEFAULT AGENDA in which the consultant allows the video or pencil and paper instrument to guide the progress of the meeting.
> THE PSEUDO AGENDA in which the consultant sets up collaborative goals and then fails to share control during the remainder of the meeting.
> THE NON-AGENDA in which the consultant simply takes off, never checking with the client nor establishing a rationale for events or goals.

QUESTIONING EPISODES varied in the extent to which they moved the consultation along. Some questioning episodes were probing and purposive while others, though lengthy and seemingly involving, failed to produce usable or meaningful data.

LACK OF QUESTIONING EPISODES consist of lengthy periods of interaction in which no questions are asked. These episodes fail to engage either client or consultant and fail to produde meaningful data.

TRENDS

The episode is a meaningful unit for behavior. It was useful in establishing shared understanding of events during the research process. Beginnings and endings are identifiable. The episode, rather than the single act of behavior may be the more powerful predictor of progress and outcomes of a consultation.

CHART X - FUTURE DIRECTIONS

What are the implications of this study for practice and for future research?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings of this study suggest the following implications to faculty developers, teacher educators, educators generally and consultants:

Implication One. Instructional consultants, even those whose agendas espouse collaborative practice, may not be aware that they often do not produce collaborative practice.

Implication Two. Instructional consultants would be wise to use collaborative methods (ie. checking, specificity and rationale), as clients tend to respond actively by owning their part of the meeting.

Implication Three. Instructional consultants, particularly those using paper and pencil instruments, need to be alert to the tendency to let the instrument "run" the meeting.

Implication Four. Instructional consultants should be trained to understand their own episodic behavior, particularly behaviors that lead to inconsistent or ineffective results in the consultation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research in the area of instructional consultation should be of two types: **Empirical/Quantitative** and **Action Research/Qualitative.** Research should take into account the following issues and/or incorporate the following methodological aspects:

Empirical/Quantitative...

...research should consider other fundamental functions of the consultant such as explaining, interpreting, and suggesting.

...research should use larger samples so that results can be more generalizable.

...research should include more data on charactersitics of individual consultants and clients.

...research should look at a broad range of outcome measures including client satisfaction and classroom behavior.

CHART X - FUTURE DIRECTIONS - PAGE 2

Action Research /Qualitative...

...research should help instructors and instructional consultants focus on problems in establishing bilateral control and collaboration.

...research should utilize the episode as a unit of instruction, discussion and understanding. Descriptions of typical episodes can help to highlight problems and exemplify effective and ineffective strategy.

...research should be concerned with highly skilled behavior, rather than with normative behavior. Researchers should focus on describing and modeling the most effective interactive sessions.

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Brinko, K. (1988) The process of instructional consultation with feedback: A quantitative analysis. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans.

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QUESTIONING

EPISODE ONE: **Questioning with both specificity and rationale**

Consultant: Which is your sense of your students, do they need concrete examples?
Client: Yes, probably they do.
Consultant: I think the question I'm asking or the suggestion I'm raising is, can you use concrete examples...I think I've seen you do that.
Client: I think so...one thing I'm concerned about is I don't want to use too many concrete examples.
Consultant: Do you think that's bad?
Client: <explains faculty concerns about concrete application>...but I don't have a problem with that.
Consultant: (looking at syllabus) I don't see where the application comes in and examples are very slow forthcoming...could you assign that as a project?
Client: Yes, that would be a good suggestion.

EPISODE TWO: **Questioning with neither specificity nor rationale**

[SILENCE]
Consultant: (while watching video with teacher) Do you think you're looking at one side of the room more than the other?
Client: <no response>

EPISODE THREE: **Questioning with specificity**

Consultant: You asked a question and left 15 - 20 seconds which is a long time...Did you feel that?
Client: Yes, and I often respond to the temptation to answer right away or ask another question.

STEERING

EPISODE FOUR: **Steering with both checking and rationale**

Consultant: Much of the material we discussed last time was not readily observable in the classroom so should I do my usual or deal with previous issues?
Client: Both, I'd be comfortable with that.

EPISODE FIVE: **Steering with checking**

Consultant: What do you want to look at?
Client: They [students] were dead today...I want to improve class participation.
Consultant: Let's define that a little more.
Client: I would like a wider variety asking intelligent questions.
Consultant: So, we'll look at what you do and the kind of questions you are asking, the kind of feedback you're getting and whatever else.

EPISODE SIX: **Steering with neither checking nor rationale**

Consultant: Let's talk about enthusiasm, you have raised it and students on the histogram...How do you generate enthusiasm in the class?
Client: By being excited myself...I move around a lot...
Consultant: So physical movement, so there's enthusiasm. In terms of enthusiasm are you tying economics into their minds?
Client: Yes...[explains a paper]
Consultant: That really helps...let's talk about organization and try to get to the bottom of this.

AGENDA

EPISODE SEVEN: **Default Agenda**

Consultant: This is a graph we can talk about.
[silence]
Client: [looking at chart] that's interesting
Consultant: So let's talk about that, why do you think that is?
Client: [provides explanation]
Consultant: remember you're just TAing, it's not like you have full responsibility...
Client: [silence]
Consultant: Let's go through and see what we can...First of all this stuff about learning, I think you're not that...not many people are saying this is a solid learning thing...

EPISODE EIGHT: **Default Agenda**

Consultant: Take time to look this over. See if you have any questions.
Client: I guess what I'm curious about or what students see as a problem is this idea of organization.
Consultant: [referring to charts] Try to look at the whole picture to see if they go along - and to me they are.

EPISODE NINE: **Pseudo Agenda**

Consultant: Let's talk about what you want to look like and what we want to look for.
Client: [laughs] I want to command more respect in the classroom.
Consultant: [laughs] Are you kidding, I mean, there's no reason not to want that.
[The consultant does not return to the issue of respect nor does she elicit more ideas from the client.]

LACK OF QUESTIONING

EPISODE TEN: **Repetition with no questions (about six minutes)**

Consultant: This is non-positive student talk like chatter, it's 4%. I think we could get this down to like 2%. I think you'd feel better about having more control and not wasting too much time. I think with your talent you could tighten that up down to about 1%, and not come across as a ogre either. I know you want to be kind and nice, so I think with these little techniques it's really not a serious problem...
Consultant: [more talk]...so maybe if we could get this [positive talk] percentage up and this [non-positive talk] percentage down.
Consultant: [more talk]...so you should try to get that down to two from four. You'd feel better.

EPISODE ELEVEN: **No connection due to lack of probing**

Client: I was quite pleased...
Client: One comment that I've had a problem with is 'stop banging on the mike to quite the students, it's insulting'...will I think it's insulting to have them raising a raucous in the first place...I've thought of a bull horn. That's the only way to get their attention.
Consultant: Yeh, yeh...I asked them on that I guess I didn't get it all down here...I asked if there's a lot of talking and they said, 'yes a lot of noise.'...[pause]...
Consultant: My way of handling this...that I recommend, of course I haven't always followed up to find if it works is not to personalize it. Make it routine... so that this...[cut off]
Client: That I find annoying so I try not to think about it.
Consultant: Maybe banging on the mike is in conflict with their general sense of ambience?
Client: [silence]....